

CERTAIN HOMESTEAD LANDS IN FLORIDA.

FEBRUARY 1, 1897.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. BARNEY, from the Committee on the Public Lands, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 9494.]

The Committee on the Public Lands, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 9494) entitled "A bill concerning certain homestead lands in Florida," beg leave to submit the following report, and recommend that said bill do pass, with the following amendments:

Strike out the preamble and all after the enacting clause of the bill and insert the following:

That all persons actually occupying homesteads in good faith in any of the following-named counties, in said State of Florida, to wit, Alachua, Lafayette, Levy, Suwannee, Bradford, Baker, and Columbia, at the time of the storm on or about September twenty-ninth, eighteen hundred and ninety-six, are hereby granted the right to sell or otherwise dispose of the fallen timber on their homestead entries felled by said storm, and to devote the proceeds of such sale or barter to the improvement of their homesteads or support of themselves or their families.

It has been shown to this committee that in September, 1896, a severe hurricane swept over certain portions of the counties of Alachua, Lafayette, Levy, Suwannee, Bradford, Baker, and Columbia, in the State of Florida, felling a large percentage of the green timber and destroying the homes of many of the people living in its path, many of whom were homesteaders on lands of the United States; that the people generally throughout the country swept by the storm mentioned are in great distress and want, and grave fears are entertained for their safety if the fallen timber is not removed before spring, when fires invariably occur through the wooded portions of Florida; and it appearing that such fallen timber if not used will be burned or rendered useless by worms or decay, and the Secretary of the Interior having recommended that persons actually occupying homesteads in good faith in any of said counties be granted the right to sell or otherwise dispose of the fallen timber on their homestead entries felled by said storm, and to devote the proceeds thereof to the improvement of their homesteads or support of themselves or their families, your committee are satisfied that the first section of said bill should be enacted.

The second and third sections of the bill deal with distinct matters which would require further inquiry, and which we think could be better considered in a separate bill; hence we have omitted them in the proposed amendment.